

For Retired Club Members



# The Best Years

## City Retiree Associations:

### DWP Retirees Association



**Dolores Foley, President**  
Phone: (626) 445-7376  
E-mail: vinmar@altrionet.com

### Los Angeles Retired Fire and Police Association



**James Chastain, President**  
Phone: (323) 283-4441  
Fax: (626) 285-1461  
E-mail: larfpa@pacbell.net or  
9521 Las Tunas Dr. #4,  
Temple City, CA 91780

### Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI)



**Ed Harding, RLACEI President**  
[www.rlacei.com](http://www.rlacei.com)  
Contact him: (805) 584-9417  
or via E-mail:  
[postmaster@rlacei.com](mailto:postmaster@rlacei.com)

### Change of Address?

If you change your address, notify Helen Salgado, Membership Chair, at 323-728-4930, or write to her at 5423 Dewar St., Los Angeles, CA 90022. Also notify LACERS.

### Have News About Yourself?

Contact Phil Skarin, 5301 Norwich Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411-3910, or call (818) 784-0130.

## Upcoming Events:

- Oct. 2:** 2nd annual LAFD Historical Society Charity Golf Tournament. Look in the June and July issue of the Grapevine for the application. (LAFD)
- Oct. 12:** Annual Meeting and Elections - Van Nuys/ Sherman Oaks Senior Citizen Center - Lunch at noon, meeting at 1 p.m. (RLACEI)
- Dec. 7:** Christmas Party, Grace E. Simons Lodge (RLACEI)



## Record Number Attends Annual RLACEI Picnic



### Ed Harding, RLACEI President, reports:

"I wish to thank all those who called and made reservations for our Annual Picnic Aug. 10. A record 150 called, which made it a lot easier to order the food, although I knew that there would be many who would not call even though they planned to attend. We had a record crowd of 210.

"I know that everyone who attended enjoyed the meal and the camaraderie. I wish to thank John Hawkins of the City Employees Club, who donated some of the door prizes. It was nice seeing friends and people whom I worked with and probably won't see again until next year. The retiree who came the farthest was Dan Osborne from Nevada City.



"Special thanks go to Americo Garza, Picnic Chairman; Thomas Redditt, Simons Lodge Manager; and Ron Black, who provided the musical entertainment. Ron is available for parties (square dance). Call him at (818) 752-6810.

"Our next event will be our Annual Corporation Meeting and Election of officers at 1 p.m. Oct. 12 at the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Senior Citizens Center. There will be a free lunch at noon. If you have called one of the officers a week ahead, you may bring one adult guest.

LACERS is having an Open Enrollment Retirement Fair at the L.A. Convention Center on October 25, details later in this article. Hal Danowitz, Neil Ricci and I will be there to hand out materials to those that plan to retire. If you are thinking of changing your health plan, be sure to attend the fair, they can help you. The open enrollment period is from Oct. 15 to Nov. 15.

### Legislative Update:

Ken Spiker, our elected Representative to the LACERS Board of Directors, reports the LACERS retirement fund has reached a new all time high of \$9.67 billion.

Ken gives special credit to the LACERS investment staff, headed by Dan Gallagher.

Ken also reports that his committee is finalizing negotiations with our health care providers, and programs will be ready for the October/November signups.

Here are details of the upcoming LACERS Open Enrollment Fair, "Your Passport to Health."

**Date:** Wed., Oct. 25

**Time:** 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Location:** Los Angeles Convention Center West Hall Meeting Rooms, Room 515 AB

1201 South Figueroa St., Los Angeles, CAA 90015

**Guest speaker:** Dr. Gary Small, UCLA Center for Aging

**Food:** Breakfast and lunch will be provided

**Parking:** Parking vouchers will be provided in RSVP packets

**Purpose:** To provide LACERS retired members with information about their health plans and benefits for 2007. Additionally, LACERS is inviting organizations to exhibit and provide information regarding programs offered to senior citizens. Free travel bag/backpack while supplies last. Grand prize drawing for a Hawaiian cruise for two.

**Questions:** Contact LACERS at (800)779-8328

This event is not open to the public; it is by invitation only.

**Poetry contest:** The Annual Retirees Poetry contest deadline is Oct. 1. Send typed copies to Phil Skarin at 5301 Norwich Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411. Separate categories for members & spouses. Any style or subject; everyone wins.

Visit [www.rlacei.com](http://www.rlacei.com) to find out the latest retirement news.



# The Best Years



China Town



By Hal Danowitz,  
Secretary, RLACEI

## Retiree Hotlines

Who to call? Following is a list of contacts for RLACEI and for the DWP:

**City Employees Retirement System:** (213) 473-7200

**RLACEI Retirement Counselors:**

- Edward Harding (805) 584-9417
- Phil Skarin (818) 784-0130
- Robert Wilkinson (818) 886-1000
- Jerry Bardwell (818) 782-5568
- Harold Danowitz (310) 472-0224
- Jack Mathews (310) 762-1942
- Helen Salgado (323) 728-4930
- (membership)
- Americo Garza (562) 928-2051
- Neil Ricci (310) 394-1971

**DWP Retirement Plan Office:** (213) 367-1722

## RLACEI:

### Officers for 2006

Edward Harding, President  
Robert Wilkinson, First Vice President  
Kenneth Spiker, Second Vice President  
Hal Danowitz, Secretary  
Jerry Bardwell, Treasurer

### Committee Chairpersons for 2006

Bob Wilkinson, Audit  
Jerry Bardwell, Budget  
David Wilkins, Bylaws  
Ken Spiker, Legal and Legislative  
Helen Salgado, Membership  
Phil Skarin, Publicity  
Tom Stemnock and Phil Skarin, Golf  
Americo Garza, Picnic  
Americo Garza, Holiday Party and Installation  
Jack Mathews, Senior Citizens  
Neil Ricci, Health  
David Wilkins, Nominating  
Neil Ricci, Special Needs for Retirees  
Hal Danowitz, Parliamentarian

### Directors

Thomas Stemnock  
Americo Garza  
Helen Salgado  
Phil Skarin  
Dave Wilkins  
Jack Mathews  
Neil Ricci



## Visiting Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)

### ■ Part six of Hal's epic cruise to Asia.

Last evening, the Diamond Princess set sail south from Nha Trang, Vietnam, toward Vung Tau at the mouth of the Mekong River. Here the Diamond Princess berthed, and we took a two-hour ride to Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon. Smaller cruise ships can navigate the Mekong and dock in the City, but the size of the Diamond did not allow this.

The distance from where we docked to the city made us decide on taking a tour instead of seeing the sites on our own. We picked the city tour, which included a stop for shopping at Dong Hoi Street.

The ride from the ship was very interesting as it gave us a chance to see some of the countryside. While there were more cars and trucks than we saw in Nha Trang, the majority of the travelers were on motorbikes. We saw evidence of Western products on the street and evidence of new factories. It has been about 10 years since the United States removed the embargo and new businesses are coming to Vietnam. Our guide, born after the war, had a much different view of war, and the people in general welcomed us as friends.

Our first stop was the National History Museum, which displays crafts and historical items. The stop also include a perform-



From left: Effie and Evelyn in front of a statue of Ho Chi Minh.

ance of the Water Puppets, a 30-minute show that is hard to explain, but was very good.

Before our lunch stop we visited a lacquer factory, where we had a chance to see the manufacturing process and of course buy lacquer products, which a number of people did. We stopped at the New World Hotel for a buffet lunch, which included both Vietnamese and Western dishes.

While we were eating, a local dance group performed for us.

After lunch, we drove past the former Presidential Palace, now Reunification Hall, the former U.S. Embassy where the last Americans were evacuated by helicopter from the rooftop in 1975; and the Rex Hotel, where the press briefings known as the "Friday Night Follies" were held during the Vietnam War. We then got about two hours of shopping.

All the prices were in dollars and the prices were pretty good, compared to what we had seen in other ports. Evelyn and I walked around for a while, and then I left her with Effie. Pierre and I found a hotel and rode the elevator to the roof bar for a beer. Our guide had given us a time to meet the bus, and we enjoyed ourselves a little too long. When we got to the street, Evelyn was very upset with me because she thought we would miss the bus.

After the two-hour ride back to the boat, we had a chance to do some final shopping as there were a number of vendors who had set up shop along the pier. Very entrepreneurial! The vendors' products were priced higher than in the city, but everyone knew it was the last chance to shop.

Our last port of call before Bangkok was Singapore, just 85 miles north of the equator at the tip of the Malay Peninsula.



The Water Puppets.



A fountain in the Garden.

# Retiree Question of the Month

Alive! asked retirees...

## What is your most favorite movie of all time?



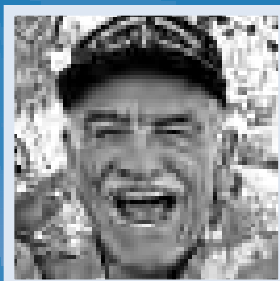
Snow White.  
- Clyde Reed



Cars.  
- Dessi Tyson



Casablanca.  
- Tony Alvarez



Gone With the Wind.  
- Miguel Alvarez



Singapore is a trading cross of East and West. It all started when Sir Stamford

Raffles, a British East India Company official, claimed Singapore as a regional base in 1819. From that time Singapore flourished as an East-West trading center as well as an important military base. Its rise was momentarily halted by the Japanese occupation during World War II. Postwar Singapore progressed from a British Crown colony to self-government in 1955. After years in the Federation of Malaysia, it emerged in 1965 as an independent republic. It is a very cosmopolitan city and one of the cleanest places I have been to.

The Princess docked about 45 minutes from the downtown area, and we took one of the ships tours. It included a stop in China Town, where we were able to buy some stuff for the grandkids. We then drove to Mount Faber, the second-highest point in Singapore, which offers a panoramic view of the harbor and the downtown district; and then to the Botanical Gardens, boasting a great collection of tropical orchids and exotic vegetation. The orchids were amazing; even I enjoyed the walk through the gardens. The tour finished up about 1 p.m., and we were able to leave the tour in the downtown area.

We lunch wondrous and round

the various shops before getting a taxi back to the dock. Our taxi driver had a general understanding as to where the ship was docked but didn't know exactly how to get to the dock. We wandered around for a while until we found the entrance. The taxi was not allowed to drive us to the ship, about a mile from the entrance, but luckily for us the ship had provided a shuttle bus to take us the rest of the way.

We had one more day at sea before we docked in Thailand and we spent most of the day relaxing and then packing for our three-day stay in Bangkok.

Next month I'll finish up our cruise with our stay in Bangkok.



The National History Museum.



Hal and Evelyn on Mt. Faber.

## RLACEI MEMBER NEWS:

Member News: Col. Rick Garza, son of Americo and Ella Garza, had a retirement dinner on July 8 in Cypress, after 36 years in the Army. He was awarded the Legion of Merit by the President.

Megan Vrael, daughter of Cleone and Mike Vrael, Arleta, graduated from West Point Academy May 27. She was on the women's basketball team that made it to the NCAA tournament. Outstanding!

Ed Hernandez lives in his motor home. His wife, Amenda, is a traveling nurse who arranges short work assignments in different cities.

Fred Hoepfner is writing a book about the history of Crescenta Valley.

A grandson of John Bogdanoff went to Florida for the Pop Warner Super Bowl Championships and won third place. John, 86, is active at Leisure World, Seal Beach.

Irving Leemon frequently writes letters to the editor to both The L.A. Daily News and the L.A. Times to share his knowledge of government.

Helen L. Wright, Palmdale, has had a book published of her inspirational Christian poetry titled The Voice in My Head. She sent me, Phil Skarin, a copy for review. It's great! Order online: Trafford.com/05-2601

Encouraging comments from: Virginia Garcia: "Thank you, good work;" Neil Denering: "I appreciate your writings;" Jerry Hamm: "Good job;" and Jane Hanson: "Your Thought for the Day is always inspiring."

**If you have any news about a retiree that you would like to share, or constructive comments about this column, send them to:**  
Phil Skarin  
5301 Norwich Ave.  
Van Nuys, CA 91411-3910  
or phone (818) 784-0130.



## Poetry Contest

The 11th Annual Retirees Poetry

Contest deadline is Oct. 1.

Send your typed entry to Phil Skarin. Separate categories for members and spouses. Everyone will win a prize.



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

*Friendship is a gift.*

*We give it by understanding others and respecting their points of view, even if different from ours. We give it by trusting and by never betraying the confidence of others.*

- Phil Skarin, RLACEI



The Best Years



Retirees, from left: John Lane, General Services, and Charles Wilson, General Services.



Retirees, from left: Edison Goodrich, Street Maintenance, and David Rejino, General Services.

# RLACEI Picnic

■ Retirees Assn. hosts annual summer picnic.

Photos by Robert Larios, Director of Communications and Marketing, and Michelle Moreno, Club Events Guru

RLACEI — The Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI) held its annual summer picnic Aug. 10 at the Grace E. Simons Lodge near Dodger Stadium.

Food, fun and fellowship was shared among the many who came to renew old acquaintances.

Thanks to Phil Skarin and Ed Harding of the RLACEI for inviting the Club.



Retirees, from left: Helen Zbydniwski, Engineering; Icle J. Davis, Public Works; and Helen Salgado, Housing.



Retirees, from left: Sylvia Morgia, City Attorney; Amy Okaba, Council; and Donna Zahner, Sanitation.



Retirees, from left: John Morea, Fire and Police Pensions, 32 years; Arlene Tom, Planning, 12 years; with Michael Vrabel, husband of Cleone Vrabel.



Retirees, from left: Tony Alvarez, General Services, 28 years, and Miguel Alvarez, Engineering, 30 years.



Retirees, from left: Rebecca Salinas, ITA; Frances Owaki, ITA; and Carol Takafuji, ITA.



Retiree Clyde Reed, Engineering, 37 years.



Retiree Cleone Vrabel, LAPD, 26 years.



Guest Dessi Tyson. Dad was Ed Garner of Rec and Parks.



Retiree Sam Hochberg, Convention Center, 32 years.



From left: RLACEI Picnic Coordinator Americo Garza, RLACEI President Ed Harding, and RLACEI Secretary Hal Danowitz.



Retirees, from left: John Powell, Rec and Parks, 30 years, and Phil Skarin, Engineering, 40 years. They have been friends for 69 years.



Retirees, from left: Greg Perkins, Rec and Parks, 30 years; and Glen Davidson, Rec and Parks, 6 years.

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